THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF EXTERNAL AFFAIRS (SHRI DIGVIJAY SINGH): (a) and (b) Out of 2038 posts in 162 Indian Missions/Posts abroad, 36 posts are lying vacant in the following 17 Missions/Posts.

Sl. No.	Name of Mission/Post
1.	Embassy of India, Beijing
2.	High Commission of India, Harare
3.	High Commission of India, Islamabad
4.	Embassy of India, Jakarta
5.	Consulate General of India, Jeddah
6.	High Commission of India, London
7.	Embassy of India, Madrid
8.	Embassy of India, Moscow
9.	High Commission of India, Nairobi
10.	High Commission of India, Port Louis
11.	Embassy of India, Sana'a
12.	Consulate General of India, St. Petersburg
13.	Embassy of India, Tel Aviv
14.	Embassy of India, Tripoli
15.	High Commission of India, Valetta
16.	Embassy of India, Washington
17.	Embassy of India, Yangon

(c) These posts are being filled as per prescribed administrative procedures and on the basis of functional requirements of the Missions concerned keeping in mind the number of posts available.

Break-through due to step by step approach with Pakistan

1988. PROF. M. SANKARALINGAM: Will the Minister of EXTERNAL AFFAIRS be pleased to state:

(a) whether step by step approach of India with Pakistan has been on for quite some time;

(b) if so, the break-through made in this direction;

(c) whether the said approach is playing any role in the engagement between India and Pakistan; and

(d) if so, the details thereof?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF EXTERNAL AFFAIRS (SHRI DIGVIJAY SINGH): (a) to (d) Prime Minister had, on April 18, 2003, once again extended the hand of friendship to Pakistan. In his statement in Parliament on May 2, he had announced the decision to appoint a High Commissioner to Pakistan and to restore civil aviation links on a reciprocal basis. It had also been made clear that India would pursue a step-by-step approach to normalisation of links and that creating conditions conducive to sustained dialogue necessarily required an end to cross-border infiltration and dismantling of the infrastructure of support to terrorism in Pakistan. Subsequently, on May 26, Government indicated its willingness for the resumption of Delhi-Lahore bus service.

Following Prime Minister's initiative both countries have appointed High Commissioners. The Delhi-Lahore bus service has been resumed with effect from July 11. Technical level discussions for resumption of civil aviation are scheduled to be held on August 27-28, 2003. Both sides have released prisoner. There have also been important exchanges in the context of business, cultural and people-to-people contacts.

India is committed to resolving all outstanding issues with Pakistan peacefully through direct bilateral dialogue in the spirit of Simla Agreement and Lahore Declaration. Government intends to proceed with present approach of step-by-step normalization of diplomatic and other links. Further steps would be considered based on the progress made, and confidence generated.

Statement by President of Pakistan

1989. SHRI SURESH KALMADI: Will the Minister of EXTERNAL AFFAIRS be pleased to state:

(a) whether Government are aware of the recent statement given by President of Pakistan about the possibility of further action if the Kashmir issue is not resolved and the pressure he wants to bring on India through U.S. President.